



**Northern  
Maine  
Development  
Commission**

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LURC-AUGUSTA

December 3, 2012

Hugh Coxe,  
Senior Planner  
Maine Land Use Planning Commission  
22 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0022

Dear Mr. Coxe:

I am pleased to submit Northern Maine Development Commission's (NMDC) letter of interest to participate in a community guided planning and zoning effort. We believe that a well developed plan as well as the updating of zoning requirements for the unorganized townships located in Aroostook County is a much needed and timely effort that will improve the planning process and economic development potential for the region.

Through significant public involvement, the final plan with new revised zoning subdistrict boundaries will be provided to the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) staff that can then base their decision on locally generated rezoning recommendations that accurately reflect the unique regional characteristics and attributes. LUPC staff will be involved from the beginning of the process and their valued input will continue in the guidance of the program going forward.

**Entity submitting Letter of Interest**

Northern Maine Development Commission  
PO Box 779  
11 West Presque Isle Road  
Caribou, ME 04736

Robert P. Clark, Executive Director  
(207) 498-8736  
[rclark@nmdc.org](mailto:rclark@nmdc.org)

**Proposed Region**

The region proposed for NMDC's community guided planning effort includes the unorganized townships located in Aroostook County. The region includes areas of industrial forest lands, agricultural properties including potato production, significant natural resources, mineral deposits, numerous deer wintering areas and wading bird and waterfowl habitat, and townships that have residential and commercial development. Major transportation corridors include but are not limited to: US Route 1, Route 11, Route 161, and the state owned rail line terminating in Madawaska. There are also significant water resources such as the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, Fish River Chain of Lakes, St. John River Corridor, and the



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Grand Lakes region. The proposed region covers approximately 4,500 square miles with a relatively dispersed population density.

The region was chosen because it is part of NMDC's Service Area and the newly created Aroostook-Washington Economic Development District (AWEDD). The designated region contains many of the natural resources available to foster economic development on a scale that involves more than one single geographic area. Through planning and potential rezoning activities, areas will be identified that should be preserved and protected as well as where a greater utilization of the resource is to be encouraged. As northern Maine's natural resource based economy (tourism, biomass, mining, agriculture) grows, the unorganized townships hold the key to job creation and retention in the region.

The AWEDD is the vehicle through which federal financial support is provided for economic development and job creation of all kinds. In addition, Aroostook County also comprises, in part, the geographic area for Local Workforce Area 1 workforce development activities and GroWashington-Aroostook, a DHUD funded regional planning initiative for both Aroostook and Washington counties.

A map of the proposed area is included with this Letter of Interest.

### **Interest in the Jurisdiction**

Established in 1967, Northern Maine Development Commission is a nonprofit organization that provides regional planning, economic and community development services, business loans and loan packaging, geographic information system services, and small business counseling services to the northern Maine region. NMDC serves 71 communities and 137 unorganized townships throughout Aroostook County. As stated earlier, NMDC is responsible for the development and update of the Economic Development Administration's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process, a five year plan for both Washington and Aroostook counties that is updated annually. The Commission is home to the Small Business Development Center, the Aroostook and Washington Workforce Investment Board, the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the U.S. Census Data Center Affiliate, and the Maine Procurement Technical Assistance Center. NMDC also contracts with the Maine Department of Transportation to facilitate the development of regional transportation strategies through the Rural Transportation Planning Organization, which is a group of diverse local representatives with interest and expertise in transportation policy. NMDC oversees and manages the development and implementation of both scenic and cultural byway corridors. The Commission also provides tourism marketing and development through Aroostook County Tourism. NMDC's Planning Department provides technical assistance to the majority of the region's communities in writing their comprehensive plans, and is the primary contact with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry on regional planning issues. NMDC annually manages grant programs from funding sources including USDA, EDA, EPA, US DOL and Maine DOL, NIST, Maine MEP, Department of Defense, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Maine Department of Transportation, and the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. NMDC also provides administrative and management support for the Aroostook Partnership for Progress, a private sector led cluster based economic development initiative known as Mobilize Northern Maine.

NMDC will manage the proposed community planning program. Currently, NMDC has available one Regional Planning Program Manager, a Senior Planner, an Environmental Planner, and a GIS Specialist for a total combined experience and educational training of 75 years in the areas of land use planning, transportation planning, solid waste management, natural resource management, environmental studies,



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public administration, economic and community development, and regional planning and development. It is anticipated that an additional staff person would be added to complete this project.

### **Outline for Public Participation**

NMDC will manage and administer all facets of the program. Our partner, the County of Aroostook will assist with the day to day oversight of the project. Other interested parties will be encouraged to take part in the planning process and will be engaged right from the project's inception. These include but are not limited to:

- Residents of the unorganized townships.
- UT Landowners – individuals, families, seasonal owners, lessees and corporate owners
- Native American Tribes
- North Maine Woods Inc. and other industry associations/organizations
- Maine Departments of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Transportation, Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, Department of Environmental Protection and Economic and Community Development.
- Environmental groups such as the Nature Conservancy, Chiputneticook Lakes International Conservancy, Inc., and Natural Resources Council of Maine
- Land Trusts including the Woody Wheaton Land Trust and the Upper St. John Valley Land Trust.
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Service Providers – road owners, solid waste disposal, communications and emergency services
- St. Croix International Waterway Commission
- Scenic By-way Committees

To the greatest extent possible, technology will be utilized to gather input and views from a wide variety of participants as indicated above and to effectively communicate with all stakeholders including the LUPC. This will include video conferencing (9 sites currently available throughout the region), e-mail, web site, social media, and electronic survey programs. Traditional outreach and information gathering tools will also be provided such as print media, radio and television and print communication. Outreach will be a continuous process to ensure that anyone that wants to participate will have the opportunity do so.

While Washington County is not directly involved with this project, NMDC will collaborate and communicate throughout the process with the County of Washington, Washington County Council of Governments, and the Sunrise County Economic Council as we are located in the same Economic Development District, Local Workforce Investment Board, GroWashington-Aroostook and Mobilize Maine areas. NMDC will coordinate meetings, where appropriate, so that common groups such as land owners, environmental groups, and other interested parties can be kept abreast of the activities in Aroostook and Washington County's unorganized townships.

### **Financial and Technical Resources in the region**

NMDC has significant financial resources to complete this project. We anticipate a three year completion date at a cost of \$150,000. We also anticipate the need to hire a Senior Planner to complete this project within the anticipated budget and timeline. Other needs (mapping, etc) can be completed in-house with existing staff.



The funds in the following estimated budget will be provided by HUD's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant, Maine Department of Transportation, Foundation funding, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Economic Development Administration. NMDC estimates a \$50,000 per year expenditure over the three year period.

<b>Revenues</b>	
Contract Services	\$150,000
<b>Direct Expenses</b>	
Salaries	\$78,819
Benefits / Taxes	\$25,222
Travel-Mileage	\$2,500
Lodging	\$200
Business Meals	\$370
Supplies	\$1,500
Advertising	\$1,500
Postage	\$500
Copies and Printing	\$500
<b>Total Direct Expenses</b>	<b>\$111,111</b>
<b>Indirect Expenses</b>	<b>\$38,889</b>
<b>Total All Expenses</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>

### Current and Recent Efforts

NMDC is currently working on two projects that would directly support the community guided planning program. NMDC and its partners (11 consortium members and over 45 partner agencies) are working collaboratively to develop a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development in two of Maine's largest, most rural counties. The GroWashington-Aroostook regional planning initiative is supported by a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from a unique partnership between 3 federal agencies (Housing and Urban Development - HUD, Department of Transportation - DOT, Environmental Protection Agency - EPA) and is a sixteen element strategy that will plan for the interrelated issues of transportation and housing costs; workforce and economic development, including brownfields redevelopment; infrastructure throughout the region in support of a Sustainable future (broadband, electricity transmission, water and wastewater, structures likely to be impacted by sea level rise, renewable energy); and healthy communities.

Each element will address the livability principles outlined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities. The GroWA has a strong three way focus on community engagement, coordination, and efficient implementation. Each element will be developed with extensive outreach and coordination across agencies, municipalities and the elements themselves. This will allow municipalities to adopt regional planning elements into their local Comprehensive Plans thereby reducing the burden of repetitive inventory development on very small rural municipalities.

A second program that both NMDC and the Aroostook Partnership for Progress have been working on, with consultants from ViTAL Economy as well as community and industry leaders, is to implement the



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statewide Mobilize Maine process in northern Maine. Mobilize Maine is a partnership between the private sector and the seven economic districts in Maine, each of which are participating in development strategies based on their region's indigenous assets and opportunities.

In northern Maine, the planning process involved establishing five-year goals, mapping the region's indigenous assets, and conducting an in-depth analysis of two industry clusters: Renewable Energy and Information Technology/Operations Centers. Next steps include exploring additional industry action teams focused on manufacturing, secondary wood products, and tourism development.

NMDC working with our partners is implementing a Jobs Innovation and Accelerator Challenge Grant funded through EDA, SBA and USDOL and is based on the Renewable Energy cluster, particularly bio-mass for heating for industry, commercial and residential. The UT forest resources will play a significant role in converting our region from foreign oil to bio-mass heat thereby reducing the 78 cents of every dollar spent on foreign oil leaving our local economies.

Northern Maine Development Commission looks forward to working with the Land Use Planning Commission staff on this project. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the numbers listed below.

Sincerely



Robert P. Clark  
Executive Director

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